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ABSTRACT

The paper is a product of the 3-year project, "Functional Mainstreaming for Success," designed to develop a model for instructional mainstreaming of handicapped children (3-6 years old) in community settings. The paper reviews research on parent involvement in their children's mainstreaming along with variables that may promote or discourage parent involvement. The literature review is organized into sections on: definition of mainstreaming; characteristics of the research (such as dependent measures, age of the child); preparation of parents for mainstreaming--parent concerns (e.g. inadequate knowledge about mainstreaming, quality of education, support services, social isolation, grading, and inappropriate models and safety issues). The section on methods for addressing parent concerns considers mode of communication, timing of information about mainstreaming, content, and delineating parent responsibilities in mainstreaming. Models of parent involvement and the importance of continued parent involvement are briefly considered. Three recommended components for a model of parent involvement include: (1) a method of assessing parent interests and needs prior to mainstreaming so that specific concerns can be addressed; (2) a variety of options for parent involvement with specific activities listed for teachers to use as a guide for sharing with parents; and (3) an active teacher training program to acquaint teachers with the model for parent involvement. (DB)

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A Critical Review of Parent Involvement in Mainstreaming

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Abstract

Parent involvement in their children's special education is mandated by law. One important component of special education is mainstreaming; however, in spite of the generally low involvement of parents in this process, information in this area has not been consolidated into a form that can be used to study and modify patterns of parent behavior so that a child's probability for success in the mainstream might be maximized. In this paper research on parent involvement in their children's mainstreaming is reviewed along with variables that may promote or discourage parent involvement. Recommendations are offered for future research. Models are reviewed that accommodate different lifestyles and interests of parents, and which include correlating child progress in relation to parent involvement.

A Critical Review of Parent Involvement in Mainstreaming

A primary emphasis of mainstreaming is to provide children with and without handicaps (see Footnote 1), with the opportunities to learn to interact successfully with one another (Blacher & Turnbull, 1983; Schrag, 1984). However, mainstreaming involves more than just individual students and teachers; mainstreaming also impacts parents. Volumes have been written on the involvement of parents in regular and special education (for review, see Foster, Berger, & McLean, 1981; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982), but very little attention has been devoted to the impact of mainstreaming upon participating parents, even though this involvement is required by the majority of funding agencies for research, development, demonstration and implementation projects, and by P.L. 94-142. In this paper, the research literature on the involvement of parents in the process of mainstreaming is reviewed. Since parent involvement is often a response by parents to their concerns about mainstreaming (Cansler & Winton, 1983; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982; Winton & Turnbull, 1981), the research into parent concerns is also reviewed. Finally, in a mainstreamed program, the parents of all children are impacted; therefore, the research reviewed includes available data on parents of children without handicaps. The limitations and strengths of research efforts are critically examined, and recommendations for future research activities are discussed.

Definition of Mainstreaming

One of the difficulties with mainstreaming is the lack of consensus about what defines mainstreaming. The commonly-cited definitions of mainstreaming notably lack mention of the roles of teachers, parents, and specialists in the process of mainstreaming (Council for Exceptional Children, 1976; Kaufman, Gottlieb, Agard & Kukik, 1975). In order to provide a common basis for studying the role of parents in this process, mainstreaming is herein defined in accordance with a definition by Striefel, Killoran, Quintero, & Adams (1985), which portrays it as a continuing process, rather than a discrete event, which includes the instructional and social integration of children who have handicaps into educational and community environments with children who do not have handicaps (Johnson & Johnson, 1981; Kaufman, Gottlieb, Agard & Kuker, 1975; Reynolds & Birch, 1982; Turnbull & Schultz, 1979; Weisenstein & Pelz, 1986; Zigmond & Sansone, 1981). Mainstreaming must also be a Child Study Team decision (Brown, Falvey, Vincent, Kaye, Johnson, Ferrara-Parrish & Gruenewald, 1979; Nash & Boileau, 1980), and must consider a continuum of least restrictive placement options where appropriate interactions between children with and without handicaps can be maximized to prepare the child with handicaps to function in current and future community environments (Deno, 1973; Hughes &

Hurth, 1984; Johnson & Johnson, 1981; Stainback, Stainback, & Jaben 1981; Taylor, 1982; Thomason & Arkell, 1980). The decision to mainstream must include preparation, support, and delineation of responsibilities of students, parents, regular and special education teachers, administrators, and support personnel (Cansler & Winton, 1983; Guralnick, 1983; Hughes & Hurth, 1983); and these activities must occur without major long-term disruption of ongoing educational activities of children with handicaps (Cooke, Ruskus, Appolonia & Peck, 1981; Hanline, 1985; Strain, 1983).

In summary, the mainstreaming process includes: (a) preparation for participants, (b) delineation of the responsibilities of all parties involved, and (c) post-placement monitoring and continued involvement. Research efforts in each area of emphasis in relation to parents will be examined.

Characteristics of Research

Dependent Measures

Parent attitudes and self-report data expressed on questionnaires are primary dependent measures in many studies and reports about parents in mainstreaming (Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982; Price & Weinberg, 1982; Turnbull, Winton, Blacher & Salkind, 1983; Cansler & Winton, 1983; Vincent, Brown & Getz-Sheftel, 1981). One limitation of using attitudes as a dependent measure is the difficulty in defining an attitude. Jones, Jamieson, Moulin and Towner (1981) point out that it is insufficient to infer an attitude only from the responses provided by individuals on questions (written or oral) or only from direct behavior observed by the experimenter. An attitude represents a multidimensional response to the interactions of the individual with the environment. In the case of mainstreaming, factors such as age, prior experiences with mainstreaming, handicapping condition, and a multitude of other social and personal variables are all potential parts of this multidimensional response (Jones et al, 1981).

Self-report data can also be difficult to interpret since self-reports do not consistently correlate positively with observed behavior (Salend & Johns, 1983; Skinner, 1957). This limitation could be reduced by supplementing self-reports with direct observational data to document behavior toward persons with handicaps. However, natural parent behavior occurs most often in private sectors where observers are intrusive and can significantly alter behavior. Additionally, observations of parent behavior in natural rather than contrived settings (i.e., supermarket, church, etc.), pose serious logistic and financial limitations for the researcher.

Since observable parent behavior is difficult to validate as a true representation of typical behavior, self-report measures remain the data of choice by researchers who study parent behavior. Alternatives to this methodology suggested in special and regular education literature include parent attendance at school meetings and other functions (Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982), providing snacks, making crafts at home, or helping the teacher by preparing materials (e.g., cutting out shapes, etc.) (Honig, 1979; Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981; Weinberg, 1982). The value of these measures of parent participation and involvement has yet to be tested, but they hold promise for use in parent participation studies as observable data on parent responses to mainstreaming.

Handicapping Condition of the Child

Within a sample of parents of children who have handicaps, parent participation and concerns can differ on the basis of their children's different handicapping conditions. For example, in one study (Mlynek, Hannah & Hamlin, 1982), parents of learning disabled children reported that if mainstreamed, their children would cope better with the outside world and would be better accepted by nonhandicapped persons. In another study, parents of children with Down syndrome were reported to be more supportive toward a mainstreaming project than parents of children with retardation, not associated with Down syndrome (Strom, Rees, Slaughter & Wurster, 1980).

Age of the Child

The age of the offspring with a handicap has also been found to be a variable affecting the report that parents provide about mainstreaming (Cansler & Winton, 1983; Dougan, Isbell, & Vyas, 1979; Suelzie & Keenan, 1981). Parents of preschool children who have handicaps are more supportive of mainstreaming programs than parents of elementary-age and teenage children (Cansler & Winton, 1983; Suelzie & Keenan, 1981). Parents of elementary-age and older children who have handicaps are also more likely to perceive their neighbors, and the community in general, as less accepting of the child in age-appropriate social roles (Suelzie & Keenan, 1981). Support for mainstreaming appears to decrease over time; i.e., parents of handicapped elementary-age children are reported to be more accepting of mainstreaming than parents of teenagers, while parents of handicapped teenagers are more accepting of mainstreaming than parents of handicapped young adults. These views may reflect behaviors learned prior to legislation of P.L. 94-142 when educational options were not available for students with handicaps. It may also suggest that parents of older children are less inclined to challenge school personnel after years of confrontations and may be less energetic in the face of new trends and new obstacles (Dougan, Isbell & Vyas, 1979;

Turnbull & Turnbull, 1978; Winton & Turnbull, 1981). Finally, it may reflect how parents become more resistant to mainstreaming as their children's delayed development becomes more apparent in comparison with nonhandicapped peers over time (Wolfensberger, 1980).

Summary of Research Characteristics

Parents of children with handicaps have often been studied as a homogeneous group; however, differences do exist among parents across variables such as the child's age and the handicapping conditions (Kroth, 1980; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982; Simpson, 1982). More studies are needed which use samples that are controlled across characteristics such as age and handicapping condition of the child, as well as other variables, such as levels of parental education, previous experience with mainstreaming, and ethnic or racial background. Additionally, longitudinal research is needed to identify the changing pressures upon parents of children with handicaps who are mainstreamed, become older, and are more visible in the community by virtue of increased exposure to mainstreaming and increased deinstitutionalization at state and local training centers.

Preparation of Parents for Mainstreaming:

Parent Concerns

The study of parent involvement often begins with an examination of parent concerns (Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981; Noel, 1984; Stetson, 1984; Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982). Concerns can be stimuli that set the occasion for parent behavior that supports or hinders mainstreaming. Concerns can arise from a number of variables which have been identified in the literature, as follows.

Knowledge About Mainstreaming

The mainstreaming concerns of parents of children with and without handicaps often stem from lack of knowledge about what is meant by mainstreaming (Edgar & Davidson, 1979; Turnbull, Winton, Blacher, & Walkind, 1983). Turnbull, et al. (1983) reported that 42% of the parents of children with handicaps in their study had not heard of mainstreaming prior to being contacted to be part of a research study. In the same study, only 33% of the parents of children without handicaps had received information on mainstreaming prior to their child's participation in a mainstreaming program. Prior to mainstreaming, 76% of parents of nonhandicapped children favored placing students with mental handicaps in special, rather than regular classes. However, with their children's participation as classmates in a successful

mainstreaming program, parents of children without handicaps reportedly became supportive of integration. Similar findings have been reported by others (Price & Weinberg, 1982; Vincent, Brown & Getz-Sheftel, 1981).

Quality of Education

Parents of children with handicaps report that the regular classroom teacher may be too busy to provide sufficient time and attention to their children (Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981; Mlynek, Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983). Similarly, parents of children without handicaps express concerns over the quality of education their children might receive because a teacher may devote more time to meet the more demanding needs of the child with handicaps (Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981; Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983; Karnes, 1980; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1982). Prior to mainstreaming, parents of children without handicaps report that a mainstreamed program may lack creativity, stimulating learning experiences, and playmates for their child (Winton, Turnbull & Blacher, 1983).

In response to these concerns, some programs have used peers as buddies, models, confederates (Odom, Hoyson, Jamieson, & Strain, 1985; Taylor, 1982) and tutors (Jenkins & Jenkins, 1982; Taylor, 1982). Additional adult assistance has been obtained via paid aides and volunteers (Jenkins & Jenkins, 1982). The utility of these methods in freeing time for teachers to devote to other duties or students has yet to be documented fully; however, preliminary studies in the use of peer buddies and tutors suggest that start-up costs, time, and effort are offset by the greater benefit of providing opportunities for child/child interactions, for the development of age-appropriate social skills (Arick, Almond, Young & Krug, 1983), and for cost efficient skill acquisition when compared with the same achievement under the supervision of an adult (Jenkins & Jenkins, 1982). Unfortunately, studies on the use of peers as interveners are marred by the frequent omission of generalization measures which could demonstrate if children actually acquire skills that are used beyond the training setting (Odom, Hoyson, Jamieson & Strain, 1985). Considering the time that it takes to train children to function as interveners, educators will need to be convinced of the utility of this method for providing them more time to devote to other activities or students.

Similar questions arise with the use of parents in a program. Parents are generally untrained and require supervision to be effective, useful trainers in a classroom (Foster, Berger & McClean, 1981; Kroth, 1980; Kroth, & Krehbiel, 1982). Additionally, programs that require parents to participate in order to assure services for a child find difficulty in enforcing this contingency in early education (Foster, Berger, & McClean,

1981; Leiberman, 1986; Winton & Turnbull, 1981), and are in violation of P.L. 94-142 for school-age children (Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983; Leiberman, 1986), since a free, appropriate public school education cannot be denied to a child because of parent reluctance to participate. The use of aides may be a more successful solution (Semrau, LeMay, Tucker, Woods, & Hurtado, 1982), but the cost of paying all of the extra personnel that may be needed is a serious administrative consideration (Jenkins & Jenkins, 1982). Volunteers, if available, can be a viable option for many programs (Arick, Almond, Young & Krug, 1983).

Support Services

The parents of children with handicaps also report concerns that special service programs (motor, language, etc.) for their child will be reduced or eliminated by mainstreaming (Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981; Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983; Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981; Schanzer, 1981). Although reduction of services can be a realistic trade-off when a child moves into a regular program, parent education agencies have attempted to educate parents about the fact that services dictated by the child's needs and documented on an IEP cannot be refused (Elbaum, 1981; Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981). The impact of this type of training on parent behavior has not been researched closely. However, parent training about rights and due process appears to have impacted educators, as indicated by increasing information and training for educators to assure that they safeguard the rights of parents and students, thereby reducing the chances of parent-initiated litigation (Bureau of Exceptional Children, 1980; Elbaum, 1981; Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981; Reynolds & Birch, 1982; Simpson, 1982; Vandiviere & Bailey, 1981; Weinsenstein & Pelz, 1986).

Social Isolation

Prior to mainstreaming, parents of children with handicaps commonly express concerns that their children will be teased by others in the class, or will be ostracized during informal class activities (Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981; Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983; Mlynek, Hannah & Hamlin, 1982; Schanzer, 1981). This can occur when a child is excluded from a group activity because of the limitations of the handicapping condition (Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983), or when others provide too much assistance thereby limiting the child's opportunity to develop more independence (Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981; Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983).

Parents of children with handicaps also report concern over the potentially negative reactions of other parents to the mainstreaming of the student who has a handicapping condition (Cansler & Winton, 1983; Demerest & Vuoulo, 1983). This concern has been related to the isolation which parents report in relation

to the community of other parents (Dougan, Isbell,& Vyas, 1979; Marion, 1981). Integrated parent meetings which include all parents may be a useful start toward reducing these concerns; however, data have not been collected on the social adjustment of parents to mainstreaming as a result of participation in this activity (Price & Weinberg, 1981; Striefel, Killoran, Quintero, 1985b; Cansler & Winton, 1983). Additionally, one report suggests that integrated meetings may actually be difficult for the parent of a child with handicaps, because the handicapping condition is more obvious when contrasted with the abilities of children who do not have handicaps (Turnbull & Blacher-Dixon, 1980).

Grading

The possibility of unfair grading is another reported concern of parents of children with handicaps (Mlynek, Hannah & Hamlin, 1982). Additionally, increasing numbers of children with severe handicaps are being mainstreamed into activities where grades are not typically given (e.g., recess or lunch), (Zigmond & Sansone, 1981), but in which progress must be documented. A variety of options discussed by Weisenstein and Pelz (1986), Bender (1984) and Butler, Magliocca & Torres (1984) provide direction for methods to effectively gauge student and family progress. These options include modifying test construction (e.g., larger lettering, auditory vs. written questions, varied format); modifying test grading (e.g., de-emphasizing timed-tasks, grading effort and quality separately); modifying the recording of grades (e.g., multiple grades on report cards); and evaluating progress only on IEP goals and objectives. Progress measures for non-academic mainstreaming must still be developed.

Inappropriate Models and Safety Issues

Parents of children without handicaps report that their children may learn inappropriate behaviors from children who have handicaps (Gresham, 1982; Cansler & Winton, 1983; Price and Weinberg, 1982). However, observations of children in mainstreamed settings indicate that children without handicaps either do not imitate less mature behaviors, or if they do, they quickly extinguish these imitations when no rewards are given for behaving inappropriately (Cansler & Winton, 1983; Price & Weinberg, 1982). With exposure to a mainstreaming program, this concern of parents diminishes (Price & Weinberg, 1982; Quintero & Striefel, 1986).

Parents of children with handicaps express concern over inadequate transportation (buses, cars, etc.), furniture (special chairs, desks, blackboards, etc.), and building structure (ramps, wide halls, bathroom stalls, etc.) (Bloom & Garfunkel, 1981). Although physical barriers cannot be used as a legal reason for

denying a child access to a free, appropriate public education in least restrictive environments, they are an unfortunate reality. A significant number of parents are unaware of the fact that physical barriers cannot be used to deny appropriate services in least restrictive environments (Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981; Quintero & Striefel, 1986; Elbaum, 1981).

Parents of children without handicaps occasionally express concern about their children's safety when in proximity of children with handicaps. Inadequate social skills of some children with handicaps can result in potentially unsafe encounters such as physical aggression. This problem can be aggravated by the poor communication skills of the child with handicaps, resulting in nonreinforcing experiences for children without handicaps, who attempt to initiate social interactions (Gresham, 1982). It is important for educators to determine whether children who are aggressive or exhibit other potentially harmful behaviors are suitable candidates for mainstreaming.

It has been noted that parents of children with handicaps express concern that other children may encourage their child to engage in inappropriate, harmful or dangerous acts which could humiliate or even endanger a child. In response to this situation, peer buddies have been successfully used to protect the target child, as well as to model appropriate behaviors (Odom, Hoyson, Jamieson & Strain, 1985).

Methods for Addressing Parent Concern About Mainstreaming

One commonly-cited method for addressing concerns about mainstreaming is through a better exchange of information between parents and teachers (e.g., Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982; Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981). Several studies have addressed: (a) mode of communication, (b) timing of the information in relation to mainstreaming, and (c) content. Few of the papers reviewed constitute controlled research studies. Although all of the studies considered in this review include recommendations about parent communication, only those sources which manipulate and/or study particular methods or procedures will be discussed.

Mode of Communication

An ongoing exchange of information between parents and schools may best be established through regular contacts such as written notes concerning the child's progress; occasional telephone calls to parents; brief photocopied materials such as happy faces or symbols indicating good or bad days; and by providing more extensive materials such as handbooks, programs or articles on current issues in special education which seem appropriate for parental reading (Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985; Kroth

& Krehbiel, 1982; Pasanella & Volkmor, 1981; Price and Weinberg, 1982; Weisenstein & Pelz, 1986). Turnbull et al. (1983) examined several methods of communicating with parents and reported that parents preferred printed material as long as the material was relevant, readable, and understandable. The authors stressed that professionals often use technical vocabulary or jargon which is confusing and uninformative to parents.

Parent involvement groups are another method for communication between the teacher and parents. Group work has the advantage of providing services to a number of people at the same time, and can be informational, educational, or therapeutic (Kroth, 1980). Karnes (1980) also recommends that parents of children with handicaps be included in academic activities and be given specific responsibilities in school functions, as is the case with other parents.

Timing of Information About Mainstreaming

In order to provide information and enlist support from parents it is necessary to provide timely and accurate answers to their questions. One strategy used by Cansler and Winton (1983) was to have a special spring orientation meeting for all parents (of children with handicaps and without) before mainstreaming occurred in the fall. At that meeting, the mother of the child with handicaps who was entering the program offered to answer any questions or concerns about her child. After the orientation meeting, the teachers kept in close contact with all parents through summer home visits, where parents were given an opportunity to discuss more questions and concerns about the new student in their child's classroom. Although few questions were asked directly of the parent of the target child, many parents posed questions about the child during the teacher's home visits. After mainstreaming, this program reported that a comfortable atmosphere was created for both the child with handicaps, the parents of that child, and the staff involved in the program. Unfortunately, reactions to mainstreaming were not documented before the intervention so that a post-placement comparison could be conducted, and a control group without intervention was not utilized. These omissions make it difficult to conclude that the intervention was the critical variable in a reportedly favorable outcome.

Additionally, no studies have examined the possibility that such attention to mainstreaming, prior to the process, might alarm parents by raising potential areas of concerns which may not have been considerations without such attention focused upon them (Quintero, & Striefel, 1986). It may be useful for an agency to consider having information available to parents of children

without handicaps, and timing the distribution of this information according to interests expressed by the parents.

The timing of communication with parents of children with handicaps must also consider how prepared a parent may be to accept the information (Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985). The stages of acceptance and emotional adjustment which have been documented in the adjustment of parents to the presence of an offspring with a handicap suggests that information may be given to parents, but the parents may not be at a point of acceptance or understanding to assure the effectiveness of the communication (Marion, 1981). It may be necessary to repeat and/or reformat information as parents progress in the acceptance of their role as parents of a child with handicaps (Cvach & Espey, 1986; Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985).

Content

The most common information about mainstreaming given to parents is usually embedded within written material that encompasses the process of special education, and includes an explanation of parents' rights under P.L. 94-142, descriptions of the process of special education (referral, evaluation, IEP's, etc.), and methods of due process (for examples, see Bureau of Exceptional Children, 1980; Dept. of Public Instruction, 1984). Within documents such as these, references to mainstreaming are brief, and generally lacking specificity of how parents can be active participants in the process.

Specific information about mainstreaming is rare in the parent literature. Within a general parent training package, Elbaum (1981) discussed the principle of least restrictive education, provided questions to alert parents to issues that they should address (e.g., how can mainstreaming be included within a child's daily schedule), and suggested methods of participation (e.g., joining the child on field trips). More specific information about mainstreaming was presented by Breshears-Routon (1980) in a parent brochure exclusively about preschool integration. This brochure defined mainstreaming and integration, and answered common parent questions. A similar set of brochures about mainstreaming was developed by Striefel, Killoran and Quintero (1985a, 1985b) to answer questions of parents of chhildren with and without handicaps. The questions addressed by Breshears-Routon (1980) and Striefel, Killoran and Quintero, (1985a, 1985b) were compiled from literature reviews and from parent interviews; however, it is unclear whether all of the questions are necessary, relevant or sufficiently comprehensive to address a broad range of parent concerns and needs.

An alternate strategy for disseminating information involves conducting a parent needs assessment to identify areas of interest and need, then implementing a parent-training program to address these needs (Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982; Project Kids, 1978; Vandiviere & Bailey, 1981). This process not only pinpoints concerns, but it also provides a self-report method for assessing the utility and impact of parent information materials and procedures. The utility of needs assessments to identify efficient ways to allocate limited resources has been demonstrated by several authors (e.g., Brough, Thompson & Covert, 1985; Herschkowitz, 1976).

Delineating Parent Responsibilities in Mainstreaming

It is often assumed that all parents of children with handicaps are equally interested in becoming involved in their child's education. In reality, although the law mandates that parents be allowed to become actively involved in the development and approval of the Individual Education Plan (IEP), the level of participation remains a personal matter. Lusthaus, Lusthaus and Gibbs (1981) conducted a survey in which 50% of the parents they surveyed indicated that they wanted to serve only as information providers for their child's teachers and for the professionals who delivered services to their child. Parents chose to be decision-makers only on discrete issues such as medical services, records kept about their child, and school placement changes. Several reasons may account for why parents may choose such a limited degree of involvement. In examining the reasons for parent reticence in participating in programs, Cansler and Winton (1983) determined from parent reports that mainstreaming was frequently the first time that parents of young children actually compared their child directly with nonhandicapped children of the same age. For example, one parent indicated that it was difficult for her to attend a parent meeting for learning to handle the behavior difficulties of three-year-olds. She reported that she wished her child could be capable of such misbehaviors. This report, in conjunction with research reviewed previously indicating decreasing parent support for mainstreaming as a child becomes older, emphasizes the need for more information about desired participation in mainstreaming by parents of children at different ages (preschool, school-age, etc).

Parents can also resist involvement because they have become too involved in the past (Winton & Turnbull, 1981). Since mainstreaming is a relatively new activity for many schools and teachers, parents have been called upon to fill an informational gap ranging from providing information about the child's history and medical services, to demonstrating management techniques and training personnel (Cansler & Winton, 1983). Winton and Turnbull (1981) hypothesize that the extensive involvement of some parents in their child's education (often stemming from fear that

appropriate services will not be available otherwise) is overwhelming to many parents and results in less involvement over time.

Conflicts can develop when school personnel expect parents to become involved in other ways, such as through classroom assistance, but the parents do not desire this level of involvement (Foster, Berger, & McLean, 1981; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982; Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985). Conversely, if a school assumes that all parents desire only to be involved in an informational capacity, problems can arise when the parent who wishes to be more active cannot be accommodated (Dougan, Isbell, & Vyas, 1979; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1978).

Models of Parent Involvement

Since the desire for different degrees of involvement is reported by different parents, some authors have redefined parent involvement to encompass a continuum of options which allow choices for parents to assume varying levels of responsibility in the process of their child's education (Bauer & Shea, 1985; Cvach & Espey, 1986; Foster, Berger & McLean, 1980; Kroth, 1980; Turnbull & Summers, 1985). Although a specific model does not exist for mainstreaming, suitable models for parent participation will be reviewed.

The precedent for a broader definition of parent involvement was established and discussed by Kroth (1980) in the Mirror Model of Parental Involvement. In this model, four levels of involvement are outlined, along with skills needed by parents at each level, and methods for professionals to facilitate parent acquisition of those skills. The model is based on the assumption that parents have strengths to contribute to a program, needs related to the child that must be identified and met, and various other obligations that must be met (e.g., other family needs, work, etc). Although the model does not specifically focus on mainstreaming, the framework is applicable to parent involvement during the process of mainstreaming. In the Mirror Model, parents' needs are listed in a four-level system. Level One, the level of least involvement, is one in which parents are informed of their rights, school policies, child assignments; and they sign necessary releases, such as IEP forms; and they receive school handouts, etc. In Level Two, parents exchange home information with the school, monitor child progress, and may conduct some simple programs. In Level Three, parents are extensively involved within the school system, parent groups and systemic decision-making. Parents in Level Four are personally involved in therapy and/or intensive education involving their child. All parents are participants in Level One activities; however, fewer parents participate in the other levels because of parent emotional needs (e.g., not fully accepting the child's handicap) and/or other

obligations (family or work needs which conflict with participation). Krehbiel & Sheldon (1985) have expanded the model to include a continuum of teacher activities that correlate with the levels of parent involvement.

Lack of flexibility in defining the roles of parents has been a target for criticism by Foster, Berger, and McLean (1981). Their approach to parent involvement is not as carefully developed as the Mirror Model; however, it encompasses a variety of options which address different needs and concerns, and which take into account the different family structures in modern society (e.g., single parents, working parents, etc.). Professionals who attempt to involve a parent who opts for lesser involvement may need to accept that parent's decision, without assuming that they have failed in not involving the parent further. Foster, Berger and McLean (1981) propose that the whole family be considered as a unit, so that the limitations of parent involvement can be better understood in the context of other pressures and obligations. A broader set of options can then be tailored for specific families.

A similar philosophy supports the research and practices of Project Kids (1978). This program approaches parent involvement using Systems Theory in which parents are considered as individual people who happen to be in a parenting capacity. The Project Kids parent needs assessment emphasizes individual learning programs which allow parents options for involvement by developing a plan for parent training and involvement which is individualized for each family. The impact of the model was evaluated through parent consumer satisfaction and through parent and teacher ratings of child progress (Carter, 1978; Carter & Macy, 1978). Parent consumer satisfaction ratings on questionnaires indicated a positive response to the program, and a self-reported improvement on competencies learned through parent training. Parent evaluation of child progress were consistently higher than teacher evaluations. Specific data on parent attendance and skills acquired would have been valuable contributions to the program's statement of impact. The authors also point out that their parent program may be costly to implement in agencies lacking extensive funding for parent services.

A similar plan for parent involvement is proposed in Bauer and Shea's (1985) parent involvement system. This system has seven levels of involvement ranging from Level One, characterized by written and telephone communication, through Level Seven, nonschool activities. Cvach & Espey (1986) point out that the model requires that professionals view any level of involvement as a success. One way to shift the focus away from type of involvement as a measure of participation is to draft an Individualized Parent Involvement Plan (Bauer & Shea, 1985) that delineates the level of involvement planned, and also acquaints parents with other options for involvement. Compliance with the

goals in the plan can be used as a measure of involvement, without comparing types of involvement across different family systems.

Continued Parent Involvement: Post-Placement Support

The definition of mainstreaming cited in this review specifies that roles and responsibilities should be identified and assigned to parents. Although parent involvement implies that the process is ongoing, very few sources offer suggestions for continuing involvement after the child's placement. The Mirror Model of Parental Involvement (Kroth, 1980) provides a guide for continuing involvement, beginning with the activities identified for Level Two (exchange of information with the school, monitoring child progress, and conducting some programs). Additionally, ongoing parent activities are designed to meet the needs identified in written needs assessments. Cansler and Winton (1983) reviewed feedback from early intervention projects funded by the Handicapped Children's Early Education Programs (HCEEP) and concluded that parents should be assigned to help prepare their children for mainstreaming and to monitor their children's progress. Child preparation included activities such as accompanying the child during a preliminary school visit and talking with the child about the change. Progress monitoring included noting behavior changes in the home and communicating with the school about generalization of learned behaviors to the home. In order to formalize the process of ongoing involvement, Reynolds and Birch (1982) suggested that specific parent activities be included in the child's IEP. They were cautious to note, however, that this inclusion in the IEP is not required by law and may be resisted by many educators. A similar concern can be raised about the implementation of Individualized Parent Involvement Plans (Bauer & Shea, 1985); however, if such plans are demonstrated to result in parent participation which is satisfactory for teachers and parents, and which correlates with child improvements, then the concerns may be outweighed by the benefits.

In light of these reports, a significant amount of responsibility for continued parent involvement will rest upon school personnel (Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985). Consequently, personnel training activities will need to include information about parent adjustment to mainstreaming and the difficulties which parents may face when their child is placed in the mainstream (Cvach & Espey, 1985; Krehbiel & Sheldon, 1985; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982). This information may help professionals to better understand the reluctance of some parents to attend activities which may be punishing from a parent perspective. Furthermore, since professionals have access to community resources, it is the professional who is in the position to give a parent information about parent support groups and resources (Reynolds & Birch, 1982). The data from research programs that

implement a comprehensive approach for involving parents should be contrasted with information from programs not using such a system to determine impact upon parent involvement. Possible outcome measures could include parent attendance at activities, parent degree of volunteering and child academic and social progress.

Discussion and Recommendations

The preparation, delineation of responsibilities, and post-placement support for parents in the process of mainstreaming is a form of parent involvement which has received limited attention in the research literature; however, as mainstreaming becomes more commonplace in public schools, and as parents are expected by professionals to assume active roles in their children's educations, the need arises for a systematic method of effectively involving parents in the process of mainstreaming. The existing literature on parent involvement, and the preliminary attempts to standardize parent training programs that involve mainstreaming provide a framework for establishing a model for parent involvement in mainstreaming. Such a model should include:

1. A method of assessing parent interests and needs prior to mainstreaming so that specific concerns can be addressed. Impact of the method used for addressing needs can be assessed on the same instrument. This instrument could also be effectively used to match the desired level of involvement with available options for involvement. The framework described by Kroth and Krehbiel (1982) in the Mirror Model of Parent Involvement provides a promising format for establishing and documenting levels of parent involvement in mainstreaming.

2. A variety of options for parent involvement with specific activities listed for teachers to use as a guide for sharing with parents. These options should include the flexibility advocated by Foster, Bergen and McLean (1981) to accommodate non-traditional family structures (single parents, working parents, etc.). Ideally, a list of potential involvement activities could be generated jointly by teachers and parents, and organized into an Individualized Parent Involvement Plan (Bauer & Shea, 1985).

3. An active teacher training program to acquaint teachers with the model for parent involvement which will be used by a particular agency or system. This training must include the available information on parents' varying desires for involvement, and a study of the variables which determine parent involvement (Cvach & Espey, 1986; Kroth & Krehbiel, 1982).

One area of parent behavior which has yet to be investigated is how parents change as a result of participation. A similar line of research upon teacher behavior indicates that when teachers are presented with an innovative activity, they

demonstrate seven levels of behaviors indicative of increasing commitment and involvement (Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, & Newlove, 1975). These levels are non-use, where no action is taken by the teacher; orientation, where the teacher seeks information; preparation, where the teacher prepares to use the innovation; mechanical use, where the innovation is first used; routine and refinement, where use becomes established and minor changes may be made by the user; integration, where the user coordinates with others to use the innovation; and renewal, where the user modifies the innovation to provide more effective methods. The levels of use are, in turn, correlated with levels of concern that range from no desire to participate in the activity, to user-initiated ideas for modifying the system (Hall & Loucks, 1978). A similar sequence may be useful for explaining parent behavior; i.e., initially, parents may demonstrate reluctance to participate in the innovation known as parent involvement in mainstreaming. With increasing information and participation, parents may move through a progression of behavior similar to the progression documented by teachers. A demonstration of such similarity would contribute greatly to research on parent involvement by providing a context for different parent behaviors, and by providing information to professionals that could help them to better predict and understand the behavior of parents.

The use of formal procedures to plan and direct parent involvement creates a system from which interventions can be evaluated and modified as needed. An agency or program that does not work within an organized framework may find it difficult to identify successful features of a program, or features which need to be modified. The ability to identify critical features of a program becomes important in light of the great sums of money which are invested annually in parent training and involvement programs. For example, the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) of the U.S. Department of Education demands that every funded program include a parent component describing the program's philosophy, methods of implementation, and methods of evaluation. At the preschool and school-age level, P.L. 99-457 and P.L.94-142, respectively, heavily emphasize that parents are to be included in the process of education in the least restrictive environment. However, research to support and justify the outpouring of money into parent programs is often flawed, and does not advance the field by demonstrating effectiveness of some methods over others. In addition to using a formal model as a framework for guiding parent involvement efforts, the following recommendations are suggested as methods to consider in future parent studies:

1. Define mainstreaming as an ongoing process in which parents are to be prepared and have specific pre- and post-placement responsibilities.

2. Systematically examine factors in parent communication such as mode of communication, timing and content, in order to identify cost-effective methods which yield desired results.

3. Assess child progress in conjunction with parent behavior. In the final analysis, the purpose for parent involvement in mainstreaming is to create a better educational experience for the child. The true test of effectiveness of a method is in the impact it effects upon participating children.

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Footnote

[1]The term, child(ren) with handicaps, is used throughout this paper in accordance with the position advanced by The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, which states that the term handicapped child, emphasizes the handicapping condition, whereas the term child with handicaps, emphasizes that the individual is a person, who also has a handicapping condition.